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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KMCA](#) [KMPI](#) [YM](#)
SUBJECT: SALEH AT DAD: DON'T PREACH TO US, FEED US!

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On June 25, NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary, Scott Carpenter, met with President Saleh and expressed disappointment with his comments during the opening ceremony of the Democracy Assistance Dialogue (DAD) conference being held in Sanaa June 25-26. Saleh, who started off by expressing commitment to democratic reform ended his speech with a plea to prioritizing development assistance and regional conflicts over political reform. Saleh sought to explain to DAS Carpenter that the speech was "political" and should not be misperceived to contradict DAD goals. Saleh nevertheless promised to rectify the situation and sent an order to his FOMIN to clarify the comments immediately to DAD conference attendees. End Summary.

Saleh's Speech: Bread Before Politics

¶2. (U) To an audience of more than 500 conferees, President Saleh opened with a supportive message. "This is the democracy era and we in the third world need to learn from the more advanced nations." Veering off his written speech, however, Saleh switched gears and demanded that the west resolve regional problems and feed the hungry before "lecturing on democracy."

¶3. (C) Saleh then implored "occupation forces" to begin non-partisan dialogue in Iraq in order to resolve its festering secretarian strife. "All we see from Iraq now is violence and tragedy," he observed, "a dialogue that excludes no one would solve 80 percent of Iraq's problems." He also warned that the world would soon see in Somalia "another Iraq or Afghanistan" without immediate international intervention. Towards the end of the speech Saleh -- evidently excited by his own rhetoric -- closed with a sarcastic plea, "teach us, by all means, but show us how you can resolve regional conflicts and feed the hungry before you help us build democracy."

DAS to Saleh: Disappointed In The Message

¶4. (C) In a meeting with Saleh immediately after the speech, DAS Carpenter noted that although he was satisfied with the initial message, there was concern over the rest of the speech, which left the "unhelpful" impression that the United States had backed the conference in order to "lecture" on democracy and that Yemen -- an original partner in the DAD -- did not really support its objectives. "We were hoping to focus on the practical things that we can do together," he said, "instead you left the impression that this process could contribute nothing to advancing the goal of democracy in the Middle East."

¶5. (C) In response, the mildly perplexed President clarified

that this was not his intention. Instead, he described his speech as having the same "transparency that Americans speak with" and noted that democracy and reform were choices of the people from which there was no turning back, but that no matter what progress was made, poverty and justice also needed to be addressed. "I want for democracy to succeed," he reassured Carpenter, "but we must also be clear that there is a need for Arab and non-Arab countries alike to make democracy and reform successful. We do not want the DAD to end up like the Socialist experiment." He continued, "In any case, these were political remarks not meant to be about the DAD."

¶6. (C) The DAS replied that Saleh's comments had been misunderstood and as such, he hoped that Saleh would be able to accept his frank comments and rectify the situation. "I assure you that my remarks will not ruin the conference and I'll ask my FM to clarify my remarks," Saleh promised.

¶7. (C) Comment: Saleh clearly could not resist an opportunity to pander to his local and international audiences the day after "acquiescing to the people's will" and accepting his party's nomination to run for a fourth decade in power (septel). In the end, FM Qirbi did issue a "clarification" at the start of the first session of the conference and explained that the reform agenda being discussed at the DAD had the "President's full backing." It is unfortunate that the media had already picked up on Saleh's negative comments, leaving it to his minister, and our own spokespeople, to engage in damage control. Conference proceedings will be reported septel.

¶8. (C) This cable was cleared by DAS Carpenter.
Krajeski